(313)

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Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN
Fifteenth session
15 January-2 February 1996

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN ON ITS FIFTEENTH SESSION

Draft report

Rapporteur: Ms. Hanna Beate SCHÖPP-SCHILLING (Germany)

II. ORGANIZATIONAL AND OTHER MATTERS

A. States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

1. On 2 February 1996, the closing date of the fifteenth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, there were 150 States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which was adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 34/180 of 18 December 1979, and opened for signature, ratification and accession in New York in March 1980. In accordance with article 27, the Convention entered into force on 3 September 1981.

2. A list of States parties to the Convention is contained in annex I to the present report.

B. Opening of the session

3. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women held its fifteenth session at United Nations Headquarters from 15 January to 2 February 1996. The Committee held ... plenary meetings (.....) and its two working groups each held ... meetings.

4. The session was opened by the Chairperson of the Committee, Ms. Ivanka Corti (Italy), who had been elected at the fourteenth session of the Committee, in January 1995.

5. In his opening statement, made on behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, Mr. Nitin Desai, stressed that the views of the members of the Committee as members of the United Nations treaty body most directly concerned with the status of women would be extremely valuable in follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women.

6. He recalled that the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the Conference reaffirmed the fundamental principle set forth in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights, that the human rights of women and the girl child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. As an agenda for action, the Platform for Action sought to promote and protect the full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of women throughout their life cycles.

7. He drew attention to four recommendations of the Platform for Action which were made on the work of the Committee. The Conference urged the eradication of all forms of discrimination against women and set a goal of universal ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women by the year 2000. It also urged all Governments to limit the extent of reservations that are contrary to the object and purpose of the Convention or which are otherwise incompatible with international treaty law. It recommended that gender aspects be included in reporting on all human rights conventions and instruments, including Conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO), to ensure analysis and review of the human rights of women. The Conference also stressed that the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, in implementing its responsibilities under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, should, within its mandate, take into account the Platform for Action when considering the reports submitted by States parties.

8. The Under-Secretary-General suggested that the guidelines for presentation of reports under article 18 of the Convention could be a useful tool for encouraging States parties to identify elements of their implementation of the Convention that they also saw as serving as follow-up to the Platform for Action.

9. He informed the Committee that the Secretary-General had appointed Ms. Rosario Green to act as his advisor on gender issues and help ensure system-wide implementation of the Platform for Action, in close cooperation with the Division for the Advancement of Women, in keeping with a recommendation of the Fourth World Conference on Women. She also assists the Secretary-General in assuring that a gender prospect is integrated into policies and programmes in all areas of the system and is fully taken into account in furthering the organization's linkages with civil society. Ms. Green will draw upon the expertise and assistance of all existing entities working in this area, including the Department of Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, the

United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, the focal point on women in the Department of Administration and Management and all other entities in the United Nations system.

10. The Under-Secretary-General noted that the increase in ratification or acceptance of the Convention, with the accession of Liechtenstein in December 1995, signalled more work for the Committee.

11. In this connection, he referred to General Assembly resolution 49/164 of 23 December 1994, in which the Assembly requested States parties to meet to consider the question of amending article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention to provide for adequate meeting time for the Committee. He informed the Committee that subsequent to the States parties meeting held on 22 May 1995, the General Assembly adopted resolution 50/202 of 22 December 1995, in which the Assembly urged States parties to take appropriate measures so that acceptance by a two-thirds majority of States parties can be achieved as soon as possible in order for the amendment to enter into force.

12. The Under-Secretary-General drew to the Committee's attention the Secretariat's report on ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee (CEDAW/C/1996/6), in which it was proposed to adopt the practice of other human rights treaty bodies of preparing a concise report emphasizing concluding comments on States parties reports while retaining summary records to reflect the constructive dialogue.

13. The Under-Secretary-General informed the Committee that based on the Committee's suggestion No. 7, the Economic and Social Council adopted resolution 1995/29 of 24 July 1995, entitled "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women", in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to invite Governments, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations to submit their views on an optional protocol to the Convention, including those related to feasibility, taking into account the elements suggested by the Committee at its fourteenth session. In response to that request, a note verbale was sent by the Secretary-General to all Governments informing them of the decision of the General Assembly. Replies are being received and the Commission on the Status of Women, which will meet from 11 to 22 March, will begin work on the protocol.

14. Also addressing the Committee, the Assistant Secretary-General and Special Adviser to the Secretary-General, Rosario Green, said she was honoured to be coordinating the United Nations system-wide follow up to the World Conference on Women, and hoped that, in fulfilling her tasks, she could count on the experts in the Committee for their assistance.

C. Attendance

15. All members of the Committee attended the fifteenth session, with the exception of ..... . However, Ms. Tendai Ruth Bare attended from ... to ...; Ms. Aurora Javate de Dios from ... to ...; Ms. Sunaryati Hartono from ... to ...; Ms. Salma Khan from ... to...; Ms. Elsa V. Muñoz-Gómez from ... to

...; Ms. Ginko Sato from ... to ...; Ms. Lin Shangzhen from ... to ...; and Ms. Mervat Tallawy from ... to ... . For the membership of the Committee, see annex II.

D. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

16. The Committee considered the provisional agenda and organization of work (CEDAW/C/1996/1) at its 285th meeting, on 15 January 1996. The agenda as adopted was as follows:

1. Opening of the session.

2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.

3. Report of the Chairperson on the activities undertaken between the fourteenth and the fifteenth sessions of the Committee and consideration of the report of the sixth meeting of persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies and action taken by the General Assembly concerning treaty bodies.

4. Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

5. Implementation of article 21 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

6. Ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

7. Results of the Fourth World Conference on Women.

8. Provisional agenda for the sixteenth session.

9. Adoption of the report of the Committee on its fifteenth session.

E. Report of the pre-session working group

17. The Committee had decided at its ninth session 1/ to convene a pre-session working group for five days before each session to prepare lists of questions relating to the second and subsequent periodic reports that would be considered by the Committee at the session. The Committee, wishing to reflect the ideas and views of its various members, decided that it should continue to submit to the Secretariat draft questions on specific countries and articles of the Convention prior to the meeting of the working group. In accordance with the decision of the Committee at its thirteenth session, the pre-session working group met at United Nations Headquarters. Owing to the weather conditions, the pre-session working group met from 8 to 12 January 1996.

18. In accordance with the provisional agenda of the Committee (CEDAW/C/1996/1), the working group prepared a list of questions for four countries: Belgium, Cuba, Hungary and Ukraine.

19. The Committee had originally proposed that five members should be part of the pre-session working group. As there is currently no member in the Committee from eastern Europe, and owing to illness of two of the designated members, the working group consisted initially of only two designated members, who were later joined by the Chairperson of the Committee, Ms. Ivanka Corti. The members of the pre-session working group were Ivanka Corti, Carmel Shalev (Chairperson) and Kongit Sinegiorgis.

20. At the ... meeting, on ... January 1996, the Chairperson of the pre-session working group introduced the report of the working group (CEDAW/C/1996/CRP.1). Members adopted the report containing the list of questions, which was sent to the State parties concerned.

F. Composition and organization of work of the working groups

21. At its 286th meeting, on 15 January 1996, the Committee agreed on the composition of its two standing working groups: Working Group I to consider ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee and Working Group II to consider ways and means of implementing article 21 of the Convention.

22. Working Group I was composed of the following members of the Committee: Desiree Patricia Bernard, Carlota Bustelo García del Real, Ivanka Corti, Liliana Gurdulich de Correa, Salma Khan, Lin Shangzhen, Elsa Victoria Muñoz-Gómez, Hanna Beate Schöpp-Schilling, Kongit Sinegiorgis, Mervat Tallawy, Charlotte Abaka, Gül Aykor, Miriam Yolanda Estrada Castillo.

23. Working Group II was composed of the following members of the Committee: Charlotte Abaka, Emna Aouij, Tendai Ruth Bare, Carlota Bustelo García del Real, Silvia Rose Cartwright, Aurora Javate de Dios, Miriam Yolanda Estrada Castillo, Evangelina García-Prince, Sunaryati Hartono, Salma Khan, Pirkko Anneli Mäkinen, Ahoua Ouedgraogo, Ginko Sato, Carmel Shalev, Lin Shangzhen, Kongit Sinegiorgis, Mervat Tallawy.

Notes

1/ See Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 38 and corrigendum (A/45/38 and Corr.1), paras. 28-31.